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Keys to Total Health

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#57 - A Living Faith

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Keys to Total Health

PRODUCED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH EDUCATION, SCHOOL OF HEALTH

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A Living Faith

What is faith?

In order to "fear God" (Revelation 14:7), a person must believe in God; for as Paul notes, "without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6) But what is faith? Is it the blind acceptance of something? Is it merely belief or profession? Or is it the motivating power in the Christian life? Is faith living in accordance with our belief and profession?

In order to truly "fear God", we must understand faith, for the fear of God includes explicit faith in Him. Faith is more than belief. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble." (James 2:19) Yet devils do not exercise faith. A living faith has three aspects: (1) belief; (2) trust; and (3) motivation. It has been illustrated this way: There is the "eye of faith", this is belief. There is the "shield of faith", trust in divine guidance. Finally there is the "hand of faith", motivation to live the Christian life and practice its precepts.

Belief is merely the beginning of faith.

Belief is merely the beginning of faith. A living faith does not stop here. Belief brings trust. We place our lives in the "hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:31) A living faith also compels us to active service. "How much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14) "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." "But wilt thou know, oh vain man, that faith without works is dead also." (James 2:17, 20 & 26) Does James get his point across, that faith without works is dead? We are not interested in a dead faith. We want faith that is alive! Living!

Some Christians are content with mother's faith, or worse yet, with grandfather's faith. But Martin Luther's faith, grandmother's faith, or even the preacher's faith won't save you. The only thing that can save you is your faith, a living, dynamic, growing faith. This is what want, this is what

we are searching for. And through the grace of God, this is what we will find. Hebrews 11 is called the faith chapter because it deals with the "heroes of faith", those men and women who were full of faith. Their faith was not dead; they possessed a living faith. These men were men of action! They did things! And their faith and faithfulness are examples to us who live in the twentieth century.

The first hero of faith we meet in Hebrews 11 is Abel. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." (Hebrews 11:4) By faith Abel did what God expected. Men of faith do what God asks in the way God specifies. They follow God's rules - they don't make up their own. Cain also offered God a sacrifice. But it wasn't a sacrifice of faith, for Cain didn't bring what God had asked. Abel offered God a lamb, Cain only vegetables. God wanted a lamb; He had asked for a lamb, not peas and carrots and turnips and cabbage. Faith isn't just doing something, it is doing what God asks in the way which God specifies. To follow our own rules, and disregard God's specific instruction, is presumption, not faith. Yet today many Christians are doing just that, offering a sacrifice of Cain giving God only vegetables, in place of the lamb which God specifies.

What would a game of baseball, or basketball, or football be if we made up our own rules as we went along instead of following the rule book? It wouldn't be much of a game. Suppose I hit the ball and then decided to run to third instead of first base. The shortstop throws the ball to first but as I cross the bag at third I announce a new rule, we now run to third base instead of first, so I'm safe, not out.

Faith isn't just doing something, it is doing what God asks in the way which God specifies.

If deliverance were always certain, in every circumstance, there would be no need for faith.

Nobody would play ball with me because I disregard all the rules.

What about the Christian who decides that the Bible method of performing a certain ordinance is too inconvenient, so he substitutes a more convenient method? He is offering God nothing but peas and carrots and turnips and corn and cabbage! "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men". (Matthew 15:9) If you have been giving God vegetables instead of the service which he has specified, stop it! We need the faith to do God's will, not our own convenience.

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God". (Hebrews 11:5) This is truly a living faith, pleasing God - not self, asking only that God's will might be done in all things. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." (Hebrews 11:8) "By faith Abraham...obeyed." Faith, a living faith, always leads to obedience of God's commandments, never disobedience. Those who say that faith releases us from obedience are deceived. Paul asked this pertinent question: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea we establish the law." (Romans 3:31)

The faithful, those who are faith-filled, are those who "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12). They are people who are willing to do what God wants them to do and they "keep" the faith of Jesus. Faith-filled men and women are obedient men and

Many people conceive of faith as a magic key that heals all sickness, opens all doors, delivers the saints from every trouble, persecution and ailment.

women, people of action, men who do things for God, men who are careful to follow God's rules and commandments.

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." (Hebrews 11:24-26) The devil had polished a nice, new throne for Moses. His stepfather was Thutmose, his step-grandfather was Amos, and here was little Moses, all in line for the throne of Egypt. Fabulous wealth could have been his, and fame without compare for Egypt was the United States of the ancient world. After he died he would perhaps have had his own pyramid for a burial place and there he would have remained until some archaeologist in the twentieth century discovered him, then he would have been famous again, just like King Tut!

But Moses, by faith, looked beyond the wealth and the pleasures of Egypt. He looked beyond the pharaohship, beyond the pyramids, beyond the fame of the twentieth century. By faith Moses saw eternity. The wealth of Egypt,

Faith is living by our convictions no matter what the consequences

the pleasures of sin, were insignificant compared to God's plan for his life. So Moses "had respect unto the recompence of the reward." And on this basis, he made his choice. He would "suffer affliction with the people of God." This is a living faith in action: choosing God's way, living by it, suffering by it, if necessary, knowing that at the end of life's road an eternal reward awaits.

Faith is more than belief or profession. Faith is living by our convictions no matter what the consequences. Faith is not something that comes and goes like turning a water faucet on and off. Faith is something that grows with exercise. It may start small. We say, "I believe!" Then faith grows daily as we walk according to the leading of God's Holy Spirit (See 2 Thessalonians 1:3)

Many people conceive of faith as a magic key that heals all sickness, opens all doors, delivers the saints from every trouble, persecution and ailment. But the record in Hebrews continues: "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again." If the record stopped there the impression would be given that Christians were never sick, never suffered and never died. But the record does not stop there, but goes on: "And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins being destitute, afflicted,

Scriptural Worksheet

"A LIVING FAITH"

1. Is faith really necessary for salvation? (Hebrews 11:6)

2. Then, what is faith? (James 2:19; Hebrews 10:38; Hebrews 9:14)

3. How can we tell if we have "a living faith?" (James 2:17, 20, 26)

4. If I have faith what will I do about God's instructions? (Hebrews 11:4; Matthew 15:9)

5. If I live the life of Faith, what will be my relationship with God? (Hebrews 11:5,8; Romans 3:31; Revelation 14:12)

6. How will my faith influence my choices? (Hebrews 11:24-26)

7. Is faith a magic key that heals all sickness, opens all doors, delivers from all trouble and persecution? (Hebrews 11:33-35, 35-40; 2 Corinthians 12:7)

8. Describe Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego's decision about the threat of being thrown into the fiery furnace? (Daniel 3:16-18)

9. If we have "a living faith" how evident will it be? (Matthew 5:14-16)

Beautiful Promise: Isaiah 60:1-2

**Now move on to the Worksheet in the lesson*

Faith is not something that comes and goes like turning a water faucet on and off.

tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." (Hebrews 11:33-40)

Faith not only delivers, it also helps us face death courageously. It takes us through every trial and helps us bear every infirmity. What takes more faith, to be miraculously healed or to bear "a thorn in the flesh"? (2 Corinthians 12:7) To be delivered from the lion's den or to be eaten by the lions? It takes just as much faith to die for the Lord, to suffer for Him and to bear the grief of pain as it does to be delivered from all these things. If deliverance were always certain, in every circumstance, there would be no need for faith.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Daniel's three friends, were delivered from a fiery furnace. Every child has thrilled to the story. But did these three Hebrew young men know that they would be delivered? Let's look at the record. "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (Daniel 3:16-18) Courage! Conviction! Faith! What if the fire had destroyed them? Would that have indicated a lack of

Faith is something that grows with exercise.

faith on their part? By no means? Their faith was indicated by the stand they took for God: "we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." God is looking for faith like this today, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall! Men who will be as true to principle as the compass needle is to the pole.

Faith is needed today, not the dead faith of profession, but the living, active faith of a people on fire for God. People who will take a stand and mean it. People who would rather die than commit a wrong act. That takes faith. A living faith. Faith cannot be hid, nor kept in secret. When a man has faith the whole world knows about it, for they can see the demonstration of it in a man's life. Jesus said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" (Matthew 17:17) The reason we

don't see a greater demonstration of power in the world today is because there is so little real faith.

Jesus said again, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16) Faith is like a light shining in darkness. Everyone can see what it does, what it produces. Let men "see your good works." Faith just cannot be hid. As an early church father, himself a martyr, commented, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." And it is true. When Christians are willing to die for their faith, the world will take notice. But sometimes it is easier to die for Christ than to live for Him. When we die for Christ, we only have to make one supreme choice that by His grace we will stand firm. But to live for Him requires grace to make small decisions over and over, day in and day out.

That important time has come when Christians must wake up and start living their beliefs. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." (Isaiah 60:1,2) One little candle is quite bright when all else is darkness. A Christian is like a candle shining in a sin-darkened world. If we would send on the light, share it with others, think how bright this world could be! If all of us would let our lights shine, the world would take notice that we have been with Jesus.

The reason we don't see a greater demonstration of power in the world today is because there is so little real faith.

A LIVING FAITH

Directions:

On the line below, mark and "X" indicating the type of personal faith in God which you have.

NO
FAITH

LITTLE
FAITH

PRIVATE
UNSEEN

SOMEWHAT
VISIBLE

OPEN
HIGHLY VISIBLE

A popular song states,

"But if your light is under a bushel,
It's missing something crucial!"

1. What do you think a private, unseen faith is "missing"? Is it very strong?
2. Of what benefit might a more visible faith be, to yourself as well as others?
3. In what way(s) could you begin to have a more visible, living faith?

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Phone _____